Reviewer’s report

Title: Qualitative Evidence Synthesis (QES) for guidelines: Paper 1 Using Qualitative Evidence Synthesis to Inform Guideline Scope and Develop Qualitative Findings Statements.

Version: 0 Date: 02 Mar 2019

Reviewer: Linda Brennan

Reviewer's report:

Overall, the paper is easy to read and will be quite useful for people attempting to develop guidelines. One minor comment is that I'm not clear what the paper is trying to achieve and what the issue is. Why is this document necessary? How does this paper contribute to the issues faced? It may be self-evident to the authors but this paper offers a very useful guideline that has broad interdisciplinary potential.

On that note, while the paper is well written, there is a high degree of jargon, as well as abbreviations and acronyms that the lay reader will not find easy to follow. Whilst I appreciate that you can't summarise the world of health research in a few lines and get it into a paper format, improving the readability for a nonexpert audience would be a very useful contribution because it's the nonexpert audience that needs to understand how to do things rigorously.

When it comes to search strategies, I question why you would not suggest a tool like Google scholar for an initial search before determining specific databases. Google scholar would provide a global reach and would enable the researcher to then understand what they need to specifically look for in the databases. Further it would allow the researcher to include the grey literature much more readily. Sometimes grey literature can be illuminating. If you deliberately did not want Google Scholar included it would be a good idea to state what you see as its limitations for quality research.

When it comes to including research in languages other than English, I question the use of Google translate. Further explanation for how you used Google translate and how you use the interpretations would be useful.

In terms of enhancing readability, I would like to see an example PRISMA flow diagram presented at least as an appendix.

I would like to see a table that outlines the different forms of synthesis techniques available. For example systematic reviews, meta-analyses, meta-ethnography, are all quite different procedures and may have different methods associated with them. A lay reader would not understand those nuances.
In summary, I found the document very useful and I like the specific examples provided to enable future authors to manage the process from beginning to end in a rigorous manner.

Level of interest
Please indicate how interesting you found the manuscript:

An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Acceptable

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